

Ayutthaya

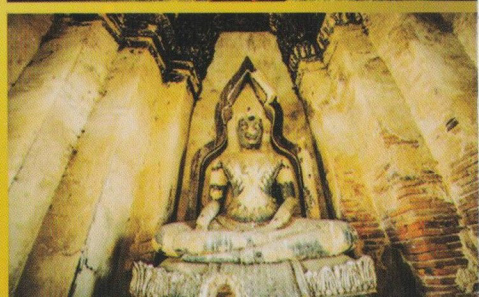
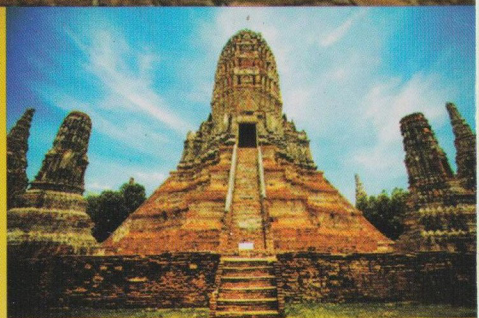
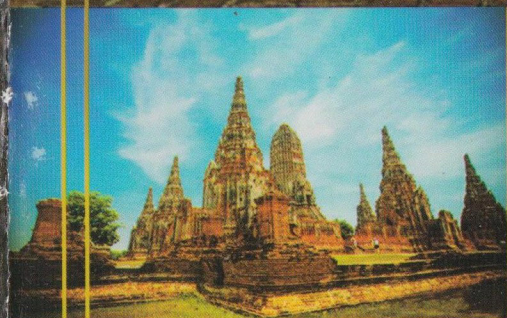
Tourist Guide

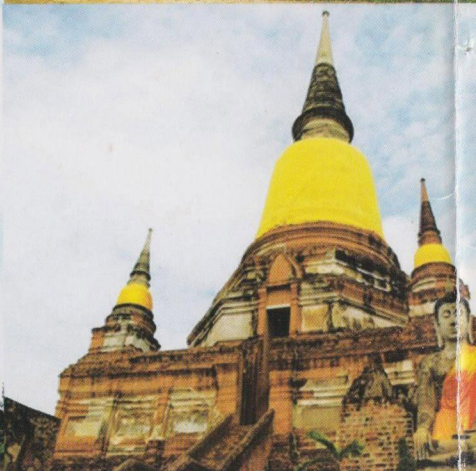
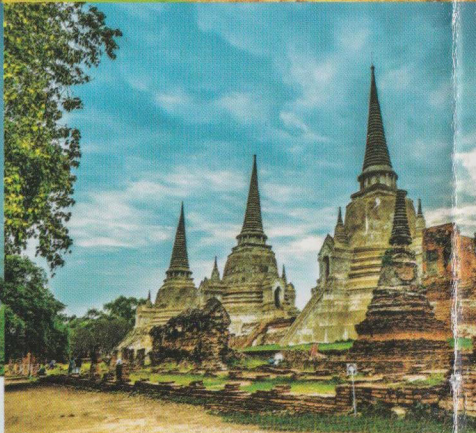


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Ayutthaya Tourist Guide

Pranakornsri-ayutthaya Provincial Administration Organization



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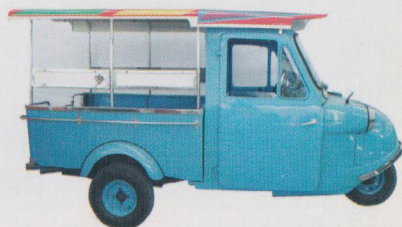
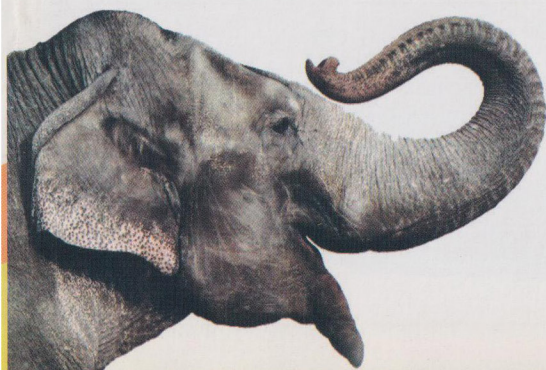
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Ayutthaya

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“an island of palaces and pagodas, canals and waterways like a Venice of the East, attracting adventurers and leisure travellers, diplomats and merchants, mercenaries and missionaries”

417 years	Era (1350-1767)
35 kings	Rule
23 Burmese Invasions	Repelled
Year 1767	End of Era

A famous writer once said that most of us lack the imagination for reality. True, but in Ayutthaya, the reality of a 14th-18th century city can be imagined by many of us. Walk around the historical park, visit the monuments, bike or boat around the island, or ride on the back of an elephant, the ancient period and place of Ayutthaya become imaginable realities.



WELCOME TO

THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

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The Past

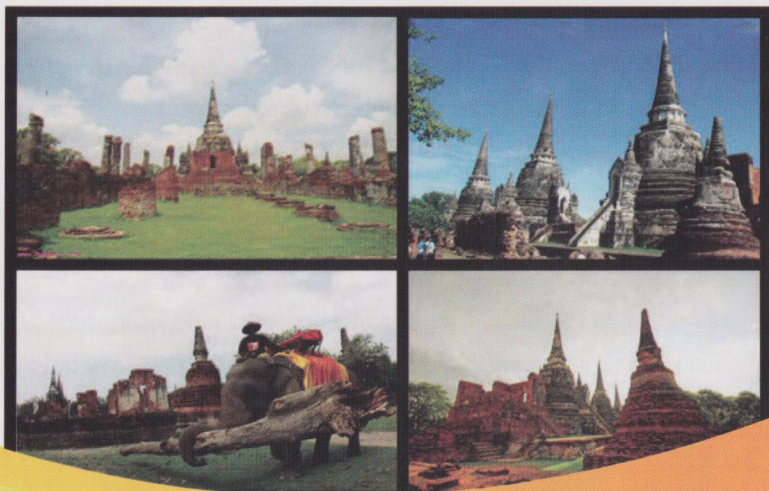
Named after Ayodhya, an ancient city in India that is the birthplace of the hero Rama in the Ramayana (Sanskrit epic poem), Ayutthaya was founded in 1350 following a smallpox epidemic that ravaged the neighboring city of Lopburi. According to the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya King U-Thong and his troops had trekked for days before arriving at a river, on the other side of which they beheld an island surrounded by ricefields and three rivers that connect it to the sea. The king established his new capital there, and history tells us that Ayutthaya grew into a major kingdom of central Thailand.

In the middle of 15th century, the kingdom covered most of modern-day Thailand. It was a vast amphibious city built on canals that have largely disappeared now. By 1685, it had a population of one million people,

mostly living on houseboats in a 140-km waterway network (in comparison, London had about half the number of people at that time).

For many centuries, the city was an important international Centre of commencement, arts, and politics. Interaction and trade with foreigners thrived, and Ayutthaya became one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Foreign visitors to the city in the 17th century, including diplomats and traders, claimed that Ayutthaya was the most glittering and distinguished city that they had ever been to (at one point, there were over 400 temples in Ayutthaya). It had great wealth, and attracted foreign expatriates, who worked as navigators, architects, royal bodyguards (Japanese Samurai), even prime ministers, etc.

In 1767, the Burmese invaded the kingdom. Ayutthaya's golden age of prosperity and stability ended abruptly. The city was devastated. Many magnificent structures were destroyed.



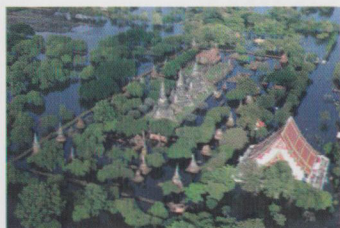
The Present

A living heritage community

Eighty kilometers north of Bangkok, Ayutthaya as you experience it today is a city where living communities are entwined with the sites and ruins of the ancient capital.

Public activities intersect with and breathe life into areas that profoundly evoke the past. The inner part of the ancient capital is a 4-km wide island, and situated at the confluence of the Lopburi, Pasak, and Chao Phraya Rivers.

There are an estimated 60,000 residents in Ayutthaya city, the capital of Ayutthaya province, which has a population of about 800,000 people.



Recently, in 2011, most of the city was flooded, with some parts under up to three meters of water, and for more than three months. It is somewhat ironic that one of the reasons Ayutthaya had been chosen as a capital in the 14th century was its location which protected the area from flooding. The 2011 flood hit the city hard; nevertheless, recovery from the ruinous inundation continues

for the people, the historical park, and the historic city. Ayutthaya is resilient, and has recuperated on the whole. Tourism is thriving. Many tourists are, however, visiting the city on one-day trips, but there is much in Ayutthaya for an extended stay.

Tourist Information

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The Historic City of Ayutthaya

An area with a great number of ruins in the ancient city was declared a historical park in 1976. Ayutthaya sites were deemed to be of “outstanding value to humanity” (World Heritage Site) in 1991.



Ayutthaya Tourism Centre

You may want to visit this tourist information centre (opens daily 8.30-4.30 pm) when you begin exploring the city. It offers travel information and maps, and also houses an exhibition that presents the glorious civilization of Ayutthaya, attractions in the province, architecture, etc. The Centre is located opposite the **Chao Sam Phraya National Museum and next to the Tourist Police Station.**

Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre

Walkways and water surround the main hall of this modern Centre, a national research institute that is devoted to the study of Ayutthaya. It provides an information service, and has a library that contains historical materials about Ayutthaya, including 17th century maps and models of the original palaces.



Institute of Ayutthaya Studies

The institute is a complex of houses built in typical Thai style. It has been established for study and research of history, culture, and local wisdom of Ayutthaya, and presents exhibitions in its five buildings. It is an important institution promoting the arts and culture of Ayutthaya. It also offers visitors a wide range of activities that they can attend, and gain a wealth of knowledge from, for example, the show of “Ayutthaya at Night”, portraying Ayutthaya’s court, people, lifestyle, and beliefs of ancient Ayutthaya. The institute provides demonstrations of arts and culture as well as local customs, e.g. wedding, topknot cutting ceremony, etc. Visitors can enjoy traditional Thai music and dance shows. If you visit the site during the weekend, don’t miss the Ayutthaya’s ancient ruins night tour by tram.

Alternatively, for those who would like an expert to tell you more about Ayutthaya, the institute provides local guides for both Thai and foreign visitors.

Ticket fee for Thai : 10 ฿

Foreigner : 50 ฿



Chao Sam Phraya National Museum

The museum hosts three exhibitions that display excavated artifacts, ornaments, art objects, items that reflect lifestyles in the past, and regalia such as gold swords once treasured by Ayutthaya royalty. Traditional wooden Thai houses of Ayutthaya are set on the shady ground of the museum. Buddha heads are conspicuously missing at the temples in Ayutthaya. Many were destroyed or stolen; if you wonder where some of them might be preserved, you can find a number of the Buddha heads in this museum.

Ticket fee for Thai : 30 ฿

Foreigner : 150 ฿



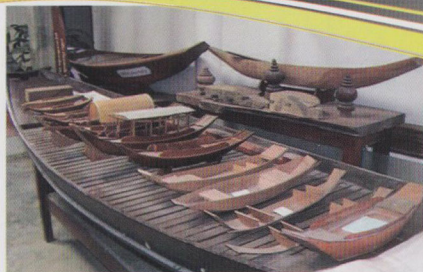
Chandrakasem Palace / National Museum

The palace, originally constructed in 1577, had been destroyed and left in disrepair before being rebuilt in the middle of the 19th century. Within the palace ground is a group of buildings containing exhibitions, grand halls, and pavilions.

Ticket fee for Thai : 30 ฿

Foreigner : 100 ฿





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Boat Museum



Across from Wat Mahathat is a private boat museum which is a large Thai-style teak house. Models and miniatures of boats, including royal barges, are on display. They were made in detail resemblance to the original. You are offered rare glimpses of rare traditional Thai boats, ocean cruisers, rowboats, and hundreds of various kinds of other boats.



Japanese Village

The area features an inscription on the history of the village in the Ayutthaya period. There is a building that houses an exhibition on relations between the kingdom and other countries.

Ticket fee for Thai : 30 ฿

Foreigner : 50 ฿

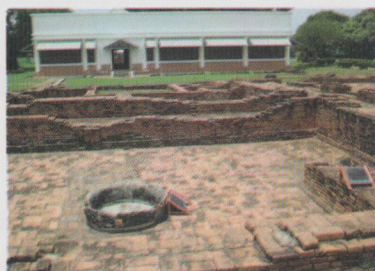




Dutch Information Centre/ Museum (Baan Hollanda)



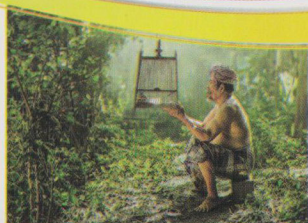
The Centre and museum are situated on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River, at the site of the lodge that the Dutch built in 1608 (this settlement in the 17th century became established as a Dutch village). The Centre/museum inform of the Dutch settlers, their lives, and the first Dutch Trading post in Ayutthaya. The Dutch lodge, a two-storey building, was destroyed in 1767. Its brick foundation was found in later years during excavation.



Portuguese Settlement

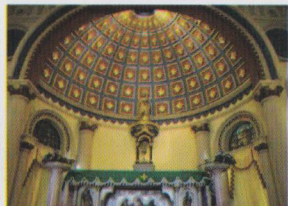
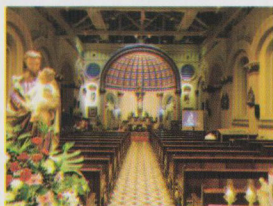
The Portuguese, among the first Europeans to arrive in the kingdom, made up one of the major communities. Today, this settlement represents the most significant remnants of the Portuguese presence.





Muslim Community

A community on the southern banks of the river has been home to Muslims for centuries. Middle eastern and Muslim-Indian residents traded and settled in the city, built mosques, and established communities across the island.



St. Joseph's Church

Situated in the southern part of the island this Catholic church had been in ruins – for nearly a century after the fall of Ayutthaya – before being restored to its current state. Regular Sunday services are held in the ochre coloured church (the original church was built on this same site by Vietnamese settlers).



King Naresuan Monument

Near the entrance to **Wat Phu Khao Thong** stands a bronze statue of a figure on a horse. This monument is dedicated to King Naresuan the Great, who was the king of the Ayutthaya kingdom between 1590 and 1605. He was one of Siam's most revered monarchs, due largely to his military campaigns to free Siam from the Burmese. He is also known to have introduced **Muay Thai Boxing** to the army in defense of the kingdom.

Pridi Banomyong Memorial

Pridi Banomyong was one of the leaders in the 1932 coup that changed the absolute monarchy in Thailand to a constitutional monarchy, and introduced modern constitutional government and democracy to the kingdom. He was born in Ayutthaya in 1900, and became a prime minister and senior statement of Thailand. A brilliant and charismatic leader, Pridi was named one of the world's great personalities of the 20th century by UNESCO in 2000. The house where he was born, on U-Thong Road near **Wat Wora Pho**, is a painstakingly restored memorial, with enchanting traveller's palms (fan trees) shading the balcony.

Consisting of two entrance halls and a main room, and sitting atop stilts, the house – like its former occupant – is a precious heritage of Ayutthaya



Khun Phaen House (Baan Khun Phaen)

Constructed on the site where a prison and public execution area used to be, this traditional Thai house is completely made of golden teak. It matches the descriptions of the house in 'Khun Chang Khun Paen' (the famous Thai poem / love story set in the ancient Ayutthaya period). The wooden house was built in 1894, and is located near the **Elephant Kraal** and **Wiharn Phra Mongkhon Bophit**.

The Arts

Ayutthaya architecture is a fascinating blend of Khmer (ancient Cambodian) and early Sukhothai styles. Prangs (cone-shaped obelisks) are common around the city. These are cactus-like towers that you can also find in Siem Reap (Angkor Wat). The prominent Sukhothai influence in structures is found in the more pointed chedis or stupas (dome-shaped shrines).

The Ayutthaya era also created a variety of arts in bronze, sandstone, stucco, and wood that were influenced by the Dvaravati, Lavo (Lopburi), Sukhothai, and U-Thong periods.

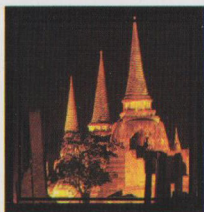
Most of the exquisite architecture and sculptures of the Ayutthaya period were created for worship, and devoted to Buddhism. The beliefs and technical skills that contributed to the superb craftsmanship developed and evolved over several generations.

The bell-shaped chedi is a familiar sight (e.g., those at **WatPhra Si Sanphet** and **Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon**). Western and Persian influences on the arts and architecture appeared during the late-Ayutthaya period (e.g., **Wat Chao Ya** and **Wat Kudi Dao**).

Buddha sculptures in the mid-Ayutthaya period were usually quite plain. In the late-Ayutthaya period, they were commonly decorated with royal ornaments (e.g., the main Buddha image in the ordination hall of **Wat Na Phramen**).

Ayutthaya Historical Park

Sites to Explore



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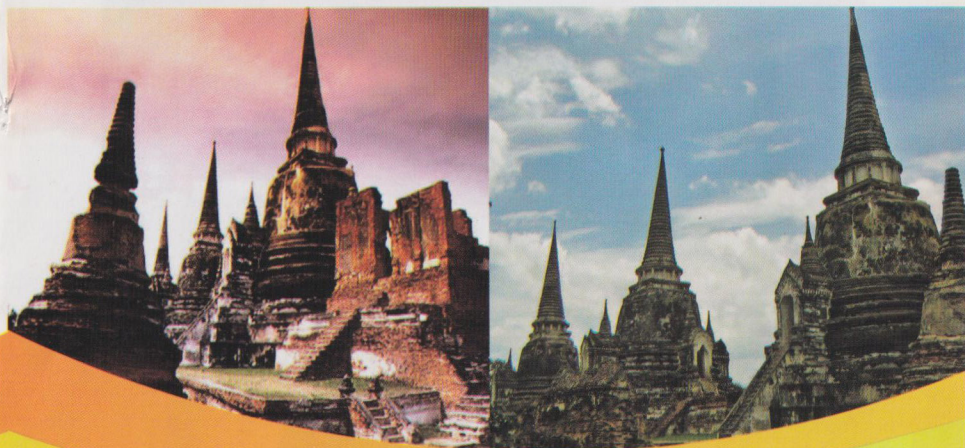
Wat Phra Sri Sanphet and the Grand Palace

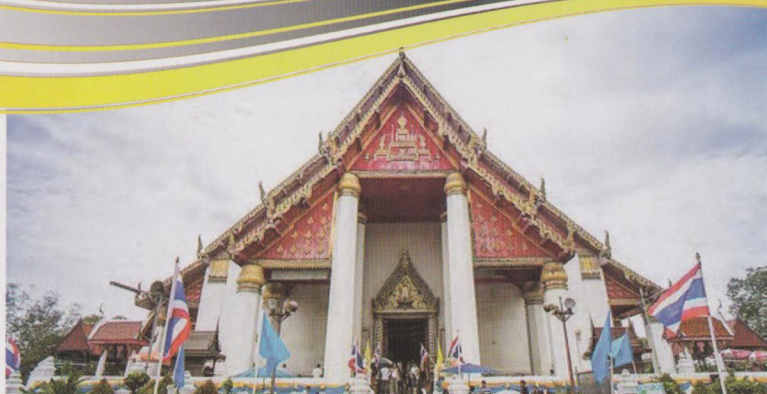
World Heritage Site

The most outstanding monument in the Ayutthaya Historical Park, this temple housed the 16-metre tall gold-covered Buddha image, Phra Buddha Chai Sri Sanphet (cast in 1500). The Buddha image was destroyed and melted down into 160 kg of gold after the old capital had fallen in 1767. Three huge chedis remain today within the Grand Palace complex that successive kings of the Ayutthaya kingdom resided in. It is now also known as the Ancient Palace.

Ticket fee for Thai : 10 ฿

Foreigner : 50 ฿

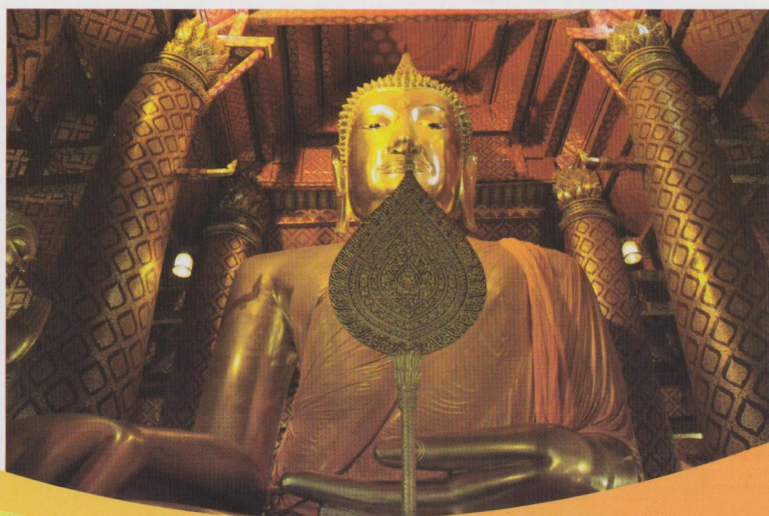


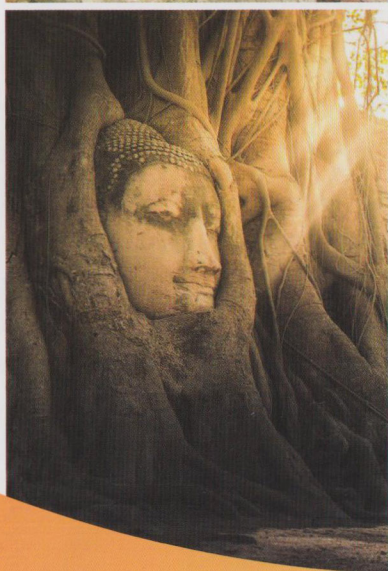
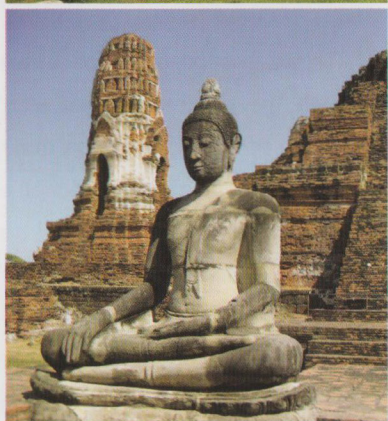
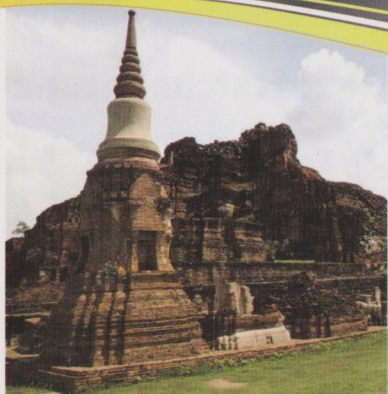


Wihan Phra Mongkhon Bopit

World Heritage Site

This huge wiharn (assembly hall) contains Phra Mongkhon Bophit, the iconic seated Buddha image (over 12 metres in height). In 1706, lightning caused a fire that damaged the head of the Buddha image. It had been restored but destroyed by fire again in the 1767 invasion of the city. Restoration of the current image concluded in 1990. Every day, large and constant crowds of devotees pay homage to it, requesting for guidance and wishes to be granted.





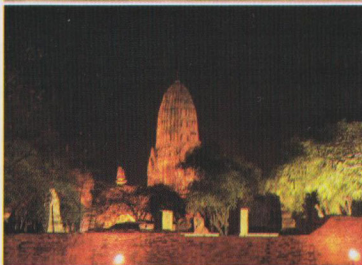
Wat Mahathat

World Heritage Site

In the area of Wat Mahathat lies the most fascinating icon of Ayutthaya : the image of a Buddha's head entangled within the roots of a Banyan tree (some speculate that thieves had hidden the stolen head there for retrieval at a later time). The temple is also among the most popular tourist attractions in the city, not just due to this visual oddity that captures the imagination, but the fact that it was the most important temple in the kingdom (royal ceremonies were held there, and according to beliefs, the main chedi holds the relics of the Buddha). Wat Mahathat holds a prominent place in Ayutthaya's history. Poignantly, it was devastated in 1767, with only a stone Buddha left intact, out in the front of the complex.

Ticket fee for Thai : 10 ฿

Foreigner : 50 ฿



Wat Ratchaburana

World Heritage Site

There is much that contributes to the charm of this monastery : splendid Khmer-style prang; biggest chedi in town; a looted crypt (underground room or burial place); and a royal drama of Greek tragedy proportion. The story has been passed down through the generations that after the death of King Intharacharathirat in 1424, two of his sons fought a hand-combat on elephant's back to become king. Both were killed. Another brother, Chao Sam Phraya, took the throne instead, and subsequently ordered this temple built on the site of the battle where his brothers died. After imagining the royal clash on this magnificent site, you may want to venture into the crypt of the main prang. In the crypt are astonishing centuries-old frescoes related to the Buddha's life. These surviving mural paintings are a precious source of information and authenticity on the city's ancient past.

Ticket fee for Thai : 10 ฿

Foreigner : 50 ฿



Wat Phra Ram

World Heritage Site

This monastery faces a large lagoon. It consists of a massive Khmer-influenced prang at the Centre of its quiet compound. There are also outbuildings, including chedi. You may go up the staircases on the side of the prang to view the city of Ayutthaya.

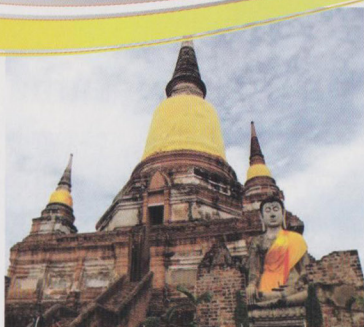
Wat Lokkayasutha

Giant reclining Buddhas are naturally photogenic and impressive. The one at this temple is 42 metres in length; made of brick and covered with plaster; and wears a faint smile with the head resting on a lotus flower image. Along the way, you can also explore two pleasant sites; **Wat Wora Pho** features a stone Buddha seated between two old trees; while at **Wat Wora Chetaram**, a Buddha sits in the remnants of a brick temple.



Other sites to explore within the historical park:

- ◀ **Wat Kasatrathiraj**
- ◀ **Wat Kudi Dao**
- ◀ **Wat Chai Mongkhon**
- ◀ **Phra Chedi Suriyothai**



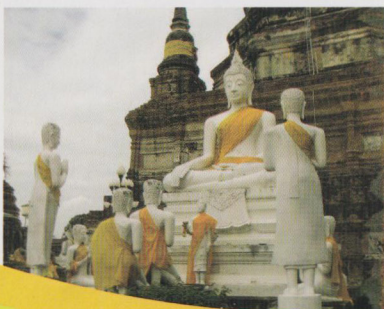
Wat Yai Chaimongkhon

Wat Chao Phraya Thai

Tourists interested in visiting this remarkable site have to travel out of the city area to reach it. A great number of local devotees visit this temple. In the compound, hundreds of stone Buddhas are set by the huge chedi, which you can climb to have a stunning view of the city.

Ticket fee for Thai : Free

Foreigner : 20 ฿



Outside the Historical Park Sites to Explore



Wat Chai Wattanaram

Situated on the bank of Chao Phraya River, this monastery is a favourite among visitors who are fond of the serene and scenic site by the river. Taking about two decades to construct (1630-1650), this Khmer-influenced complex has four satellite chedis around the main prang, and 120 seated Buddhas made of stucco.

Bang Pa-In Palace

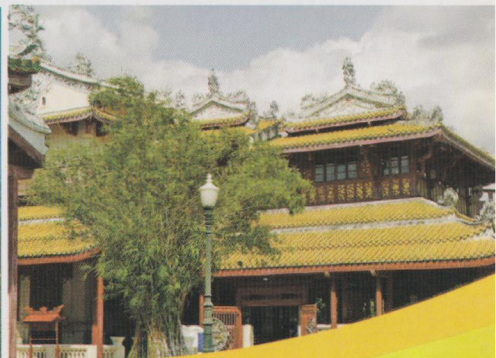
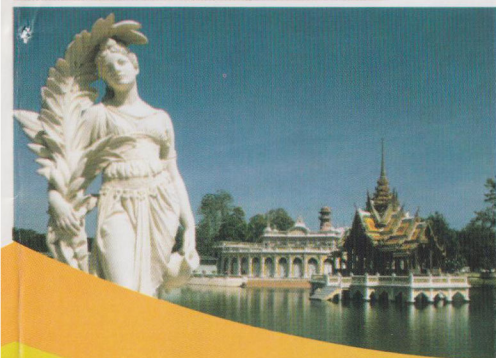
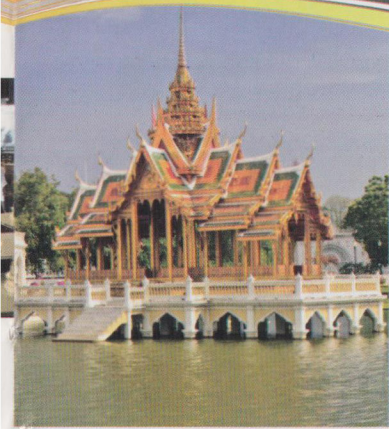
The palace was used by many kings of Ayutthaya. It is now a popular side-trip for tourists visiting the city. The site consists of the palace in a lake, several buildings (many European-styled monuments), gardens, ponds, fountains, bridges, and an exhibition hall that provides the history of the palace, and information on Thai monarchs.

You may also like

- ◀ Wat Phanan Choeng
- ◀ Wat PhuKhao Thong

Ticket fee for Thai : 30฿

Foreigner : 100฿



Other Attractions

ARTS

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Bang Sai Folk Arts and Craft Centre

From weaving, basketry, silk-making, wood carving to furniture production, you can appreciate activities and products of such arts and crafts at this Centre. Farmers from Ayutthaya and other regions are trained in making folk arts and crafts here. The Centre, located along the Chao Phraya River, offers arts and crafts-making demonstrations, Thai classical dances and folk entertainment on weekends and national holidays, as well as shops selling products.

Ticket fee for Thai : 50฿

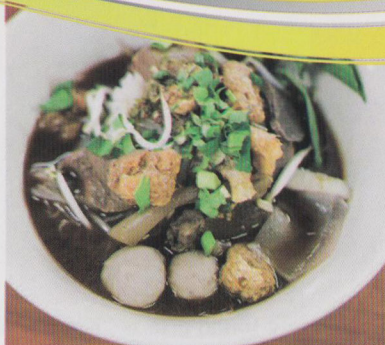
Foreigner : 100฿



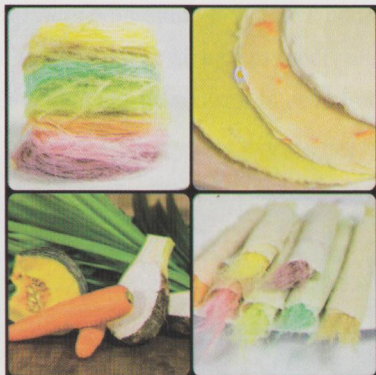
Food

Ayutthaya Highlights

Boat noodles is an awkward translation of the Ayutthaya specialty known in Thai as “Kuay Tiaw-Reua”. It referred to noodles sold from a boat, and is an extremely popular local food in Thailand. Boat noodles are believed to have originated in Ayutthaya many centuries ago which makes it an ancient Thai dish. The noodles were sold by vendors in wooden rowboats on the rivers and canals. Today, the 21st century version may not be very different; it consists of a dark brown soup filled with pork liver, pig blood curd, crispy fried pork skin, roasted pork, pork balls (pork pork pork) and rice noodles (a variety to choose from). The locals traditionally order no less than two bowls of it, but that’s because the dish is normally served in a small “nit-noi” bowl with a small “nit-noi” helping.



Another highlight is the “Roti Sai Mai”, a sweet Ayutthaya delicacy of rolled pancakes with candy floss (of flavours ranging from banana, coconut, strawberry to pandan leaf). All day and night on “Roti Road” along U-Thong Road, Roti Sai Mai vendors churn out an endless supply of the colourful pancakes to satisfy customers’ demand.





Commonly found also is “Khao Mok Kai”, a Muslim dish probably inherited from the early Muslim settlers. Similar to the Indian biryani dish, it consists of yellow rice (cooked with spices), roasted chicken legs or thighs, with fried garlic.



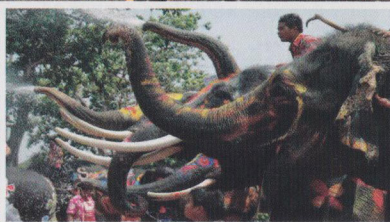
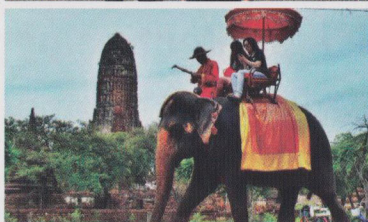
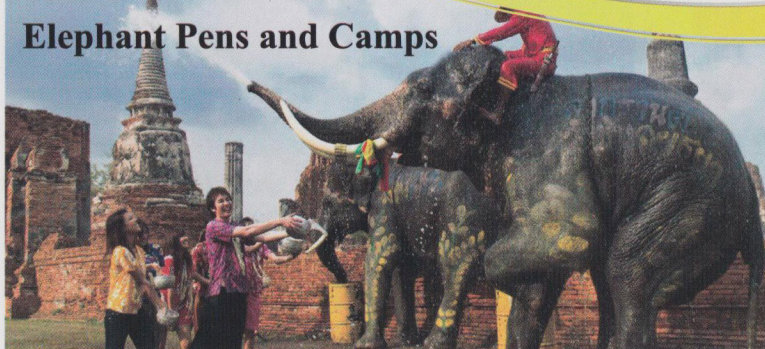
Food tours

Take the time to discover the waterside restaurants where a great variety of local foods are available. Travel agencies also offer full-day Food Tours that combine cultural tours with exquisite cuisine, allowing the visitor to soak in the sights plus the experience of enjoying local food, and even observing the chefs in their element (inside the kitchen).



Activities

Elephant Pens and Camps



If you have ridden on elephants in Ayutthaya and wondered where these noble creatures live, you may like to visit the **Elephant Kraal**. This is where the elephants and their mahouts reside, and if you're really into the elephant experience, you can stay at the kraal (enclosure for animals). And learn how to care for and train elephants. Elephants have an important place in the history of Ayutthaya. The pavilion there was used as the royal seat for observing the rounding-up of the animals. There are also elephant camps in the province, such as the **Ayutthaya Elephant Camp** located opposite Khum Khun Phaen. It offers elephant rides and shows every day. Another is the **Ayothaya Elephant Camp** in Tambon Phai Ling that provides trips on elephant's back. Activities of the trip include crossing streams, bird-watching in the forest, and visits to ancient monuments.

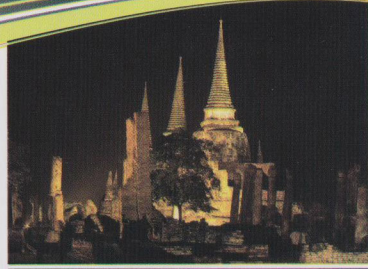
Ticket fee for Thai : 200฿

Foreigner :400฿



Rice Barge Cruise

Fancy a cruise and even dinner of traditional Thai cuisine on a rice barge? That can be arranged. Rice barges, some made of teak, have been beautifully converted into cruise boats that can drift around Ayutthaya for you to soak in the atmosphere. The barges themselves are Ayutthaya's cultural heritage, relics of a golden age. You will discover sites along the encircling river, and gaze upon activities of the people living along the river banks. To travel by cruise boats from Bangkok to Ayutthaya, often stopping at Ko Kret and Bang Pa-In along the way, you will have to set a full day for the trip. The companies running the larger (some very luxurious) boats arrange overnight luxury cruise tours.



Night Sightseeing

Walking about in the tropical heat during the day is not everyone's idea of fun. Venture out for sightseeing in the night! The popular sites are lighted after the sun goes down, and the sights are all the more stunning. Guesthouses and agencies organize night tours (even though most of the site compounds close at 6 pm) for visitors to experience the ruins in an ambience that's just as mesmerizing (very mesmerizing). There are also bicycle tours by night that are arranged by a few organizations and agencies.



Another glorious cultural heritage of the ancient capital is the **Royal Barge Procession**. It is believed that the procession was initiated in the 14th century during the Ayutthaya period. It is a ceremony that has been performed for about 700 years, and carries religious and royal significance. Both the procession and the magnificent Royal Barges are exquisite expressions of Thai craftsmanship and traditional art. With the logistics involving 52 barges, and over 2,000 oarsmen, the Royal Barge Procession along the Chao Phraya River is rarely held; normally, only the most significant cultural and religious occasions.



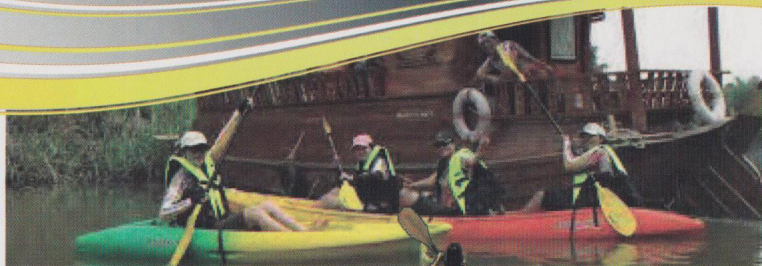
Boat Trips

You can charter a boat for a trip along the rivers. Long-tailed boats for hire can be found at the pier in front of **Chantharakasem National Museum**, **PomPhet Pier**, and **Wat Phananchong Pier**. To view impressive scenery and observe local lifestyle by the rivers as well as around the town island, there are several routes to choose from. Some will allow you to make stops at temples by the river, out side the historic city, such as **Wat Putthaisawan**, **Wat Phananchong**, **Wat Chai Wattanaram**, and **Wat Yai Chaimong-khon**.



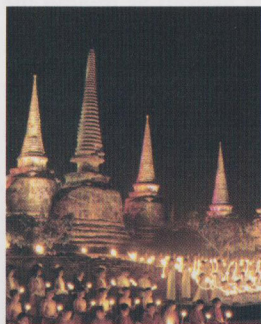
Bike Tours

An excellent way to wander about is biking. Finding a bicycle to hire for the day is easy, and they are everywhere. Mopeds are also available for rent. You cannot cycle through the park areas, but you discover the local culture as the city can be easily covered on a bike. Too lazy or going somewhere further out? TukTuk, the three-wheelers can be hired for the day.



Kayaking

To get an intense workout after digging into those great meals of local cuisine, you may opt to cycle, kayak, or cruise. Alternatively, you may also do a combination of all three, including staying overnight with a local family to help them prepare your dinner. Several adventure groups and tour agencies offer various programs to suit your preferences. Note: you need to have the physical grading – medium level of fitness – to take on this excellent way to explore Ayutthaya, and gain a cultural experience to remember.



Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair (December)

This is an annual event to commemorate the inscription of sites in Ayutthaya on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1991. The fair celebrates local traditions and way of life, arts and handicrafts, and includes cultural performances. The light and sound show at the site of the ruins relates the history of the Ayutthaya kingdom, featuring fireworks and staged battles involving elephants.



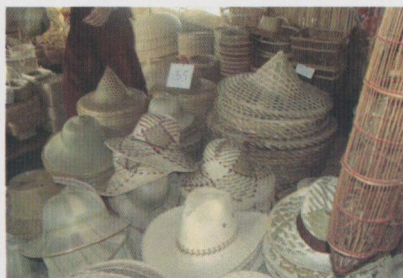
Handicrafts

Bamboo fans



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Bamboo fan weaving in the district of Ban Phraek has been passed down through the generations. In the past, a simple technique was used to weave the fans, trimming and sewing the borders by hand with plain white cloth. The fan takes on the form of a Bodhi leaf (heart-shaped), and the craft has evolved, involving more sophisticated techniques and designs, with gold cloth fringing the borders.

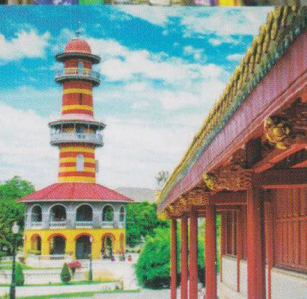
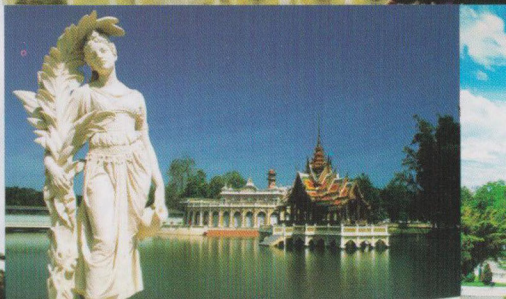
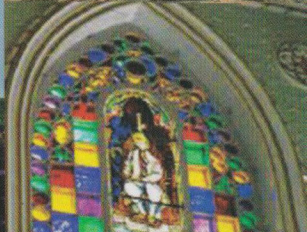
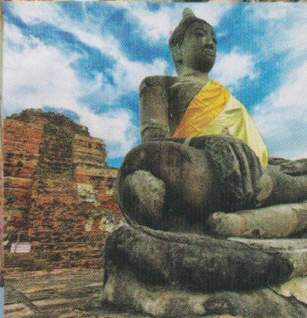
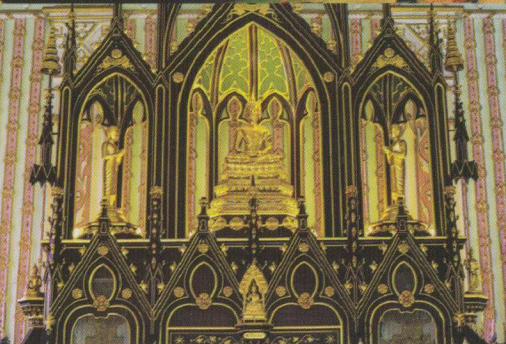
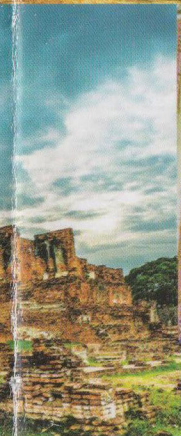
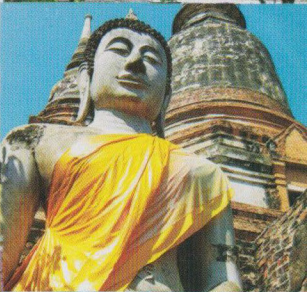
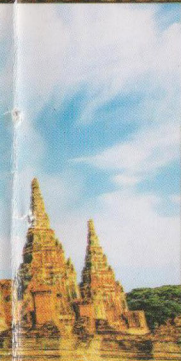
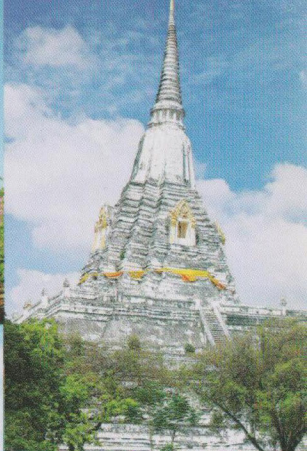


Palm-leaf handicrafts

Well-crafted **palm-leaf fish mobiles**, as hanging decorations or children's toys, are known to be made by local Muslims in Ayutthaya. For more than a hundred years, they have inherited skills in weaving palm-leaf products. Muslim spice traders whose houseboats plied the Chao Phraya River in the past, having intimate bond with water and marine animals, might have used palm-leaf to weave fish mobiles. It is believed that Thais regarded the barb fish as an auspicious living being that brings prosperity. Fish mobiles were hung along the house corridors. The crafts, in the shape and image of a fish, also decorate children's cradles. Another **palm-leaf hat**. It is the official product promoted at the sub-district level of the province. The craftsmanship in weaving palm-leaf hat has been passed down since the ancient time of Ayutthaya.

PHRA NAKORN SI AYUTTHAYA TOURIST MAP







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ฝ่ายส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยวองค์การบริหารส่วนจังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา